What is claimed is:

1	1. A programmable batch processing engine for a computer network
2	comprising:
3	a design tool subsystem operable on a first computer that creates a set of
4	specifications in response to user input, the set of specifications defining a template for
5.	user-desired processing services to be performed;
6	wherein the specifications identify processing properties for said
7	processing services to define the execution of a batch application;
8	a specification server subsystem adapted to store said template for
9	enabling access to said template from the computer network;
10	a processing subsystem adapted to perform processing of the batch
11	application according to a user defined version of said template; and
12	a middleware subsystem providing communication of the specifications
13	from the design tool subsystem to the processing subsystem
1	2. An engine as in claim 1, wherein the processing subsystem is
2	implemented using the first computer.
1	3. An engine as in claim 1, wherein the processing subsystem is
2	implemented using a second computer.
1	4. An engine as in claim 1, further comprising a second computer,
2	wherein the specifications are sent from the first computer to the second computer for
3	storage, and are sent from the second computer to the processing subsystem for
4	processing.
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2.	database facilities and further comprising a database middleware subsystem adapted to
3	direct access to the database facilities in accordance with the specifications.
1.	6. An engine as in claim 1, further comprising a network having
2	input-output facilities and further comprising an input-output middleware subsystem

3	adapted to direct access to the input-output facilities in accordance with the
4	specifications.
1	7. An engine as in claim 1, wherein said processing subsystem is
2	implemented using a second computer adapted to send to the first computer completion
3	data in response to completion of processing in accordance with the specifications by the
4	second computer.
1	8. An engine as in claim 1, wherein said processing subsystem is
2	implemented using a second computer adapted to send to the first computer error data in
3	response to detection of an error in processing according to the specifications by the
4	second computer.
1	9. An engine as in claim 6, wherein the input-output middleware
2	subsystem is adapted to selectively route an input-output data stream to one of a plurality
3	of input-output devices and to convert the data stream to a format suitable for the selected
4	one of the plurality of input-output devices
1	10. A data processing method, comprising:
2	generating a set of specifications defining a template for user-desired
3	processing services to be performed;
4	identifying processing properties for said processing services to define the
5	execution of a batch application;
6	storing said template on a specifications server, said template thereby
7	being available to a plurality of users;
8	sending said template to a processing subsystem for processing the batch
9	application according to a user defined version of said template; and
10	sending the results of the processing to one of said plurality of users.
1	11. A method as in claim 10, further comprising directing access to
2	database facilities in accordance with the specifications by using database middleware.
1	12. A method as in claim 10, further comprising directing access to
2	input-output facilities in accordance with the specification by using input-output
3	middleware.

1	13. A method as in claim 10, further comprising sending completion
2	data from the processing subsystem in response to completion of processing in
3	accordance with the specifications by the processing subsystem.
1	14. A method as in claim 10, further comprising sending error data
2	from the processing subsystem in response to detection of an error in processing in
3	accordance with the specifications by the processing subsystem.
1	15. A method as in claim 12, further comprising selectively routing, by
2	the input-output middleware, an input-output data stream to one of a plurality of input-
3	output devices and converting the data stream to a format suitable thereto.
1	16. A programmable batch processing engine for a processing system
2	including a plurality of computers connected by a network, comprising:
3	design tool means for creating a set of specifications on one of the
4	computers defining a template for desired processing services, said specifications
5	identifying processing properties for said processing services to define the execution of a
6	batch application;
7	specification means for storing said template on another one of the
8	computers to provide the plurality of computers with access to said template;
9	processing means responsive to said template for processing said
10	batch application in accordance with a user defined version of said template on a further
11	one of the computers; and
12	middleware means for communicating information including said
13	set of specifications between the plurality of computers.
1	17. An engine according to claim 16, further including database means
2	for storing data required by said processing means when executing said batch application
3	on an additional one of the computers.
1	18. An engine according to claim 16, further including output means
2	responsive to completion data generated by said processing of said batch application for
3	managing output information on an additional one of the computers.

1	19. A method for a processing a batch application on a processing
2	system including a plurality of computers connected by a network, comprising:
3	creating a set of specifications on one of the computers defining a
4	template for desired processing services;
5	identifying processing properties for said processing services to
6	define the execution of a batch application;
7	storing said template on another one of the computers to provide
8	the plurality of computers with access to said template;
9	processing said batch application in accordance with a user defined
10	version of said template on a further one of the computers; and
11	communicating information including said set of specifications
12	between the plurality of computers.
1	20. A method according to claim 19, further including storing data
2	required by said processing means when processing said batch application on an
3	additional one of the computers.
1	21. A method according to claim 19, further including managing
2	output information on an additional one of the computers in response to completion data
3	generated by said processing of said batch application.